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1.) Pay, Promotions, Policy: Big Changes On Horizon / 20 July 15

NAVY TIMES, Andrew Tilghman

The transformation of the military retirement plan that is likely to become law later this year is hardly the end of such changes, said the leading Pentagon architect of proposed reforms to the armed services' personnel system.

"It is a watershed change. It is not enough of a change, though, because we have to do still more," acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson said about the retirement reform.

In an interview from his Pentagon office, Carson spoke to Military Times about his ambitious and controversial plans to reshape DoD's system for paying, promoting and managing its roughly 2.2 million active-duty troops and reservists.

Unlike most top defense officials just a couple of years ago, however, Carson said the far-reaching changes he envisions for military pay and benefits are not primarily a cost-cutting effort in response to defense budget cuts.

In fact, he said, rising per-troop costs may be unavoidable when building the kind of technologically savvy force the military will need in the 21st century.

"I have no quibble with the amount we pay our service members, whom we have asked to make enormous sacrifices over the past 15 years," Carson said.

"I think we need to change the debate a little bit."

His attention at this point is focused on quite basic issues:

- . How troops are paid. Carson is suggesting fundamental changes to the military pay tables that for decades have mandated roughly equal compensation for all career fields.
- . How troops are promoted. He wants to look at ways to phase out traditional "up-or-out" rules that emphasize seniority over individual skills and qualifications.
- . How troops are assigned. He's looking at ways to better match individual service members with the jobs that suit them best, calling for a shift away from more standardized career tracks and the implicit penalties for troops who deviate from those tracks along the way.

In short, he envisions a military personnel system in which troops in some career fields are paid more than others, in which young and highly talented troops could earn promotions regardless of time spent in their current paygrades, and in which officers and enlisted members could focus more on developing specialized skills rather than "checking the boxes" with bureaucratic assignments.

"We have to move to a world of talent management, not this kind of industrial-age mass production of people who are interchangeable with one another," Carson said. "We have to recognize that every person has unique talents and every job has unique requirements, and our job here is to match them up."

Through a "revolution in talent management," he said, "we can, in a painless way, make service members better and the institution better because we are matching people with the right jobs."

'Revolutionary Change'

Carson's assumption of his post earlier this year has shaken up DoD's personnel and readiness directorate, which for years has exercised limited influence inside the Pentagon and has struggled with poor leadership and high turnover.

Carson, who often sports cowboy boots with his business suits, has a varied background, including stints as a lawyer and businessman in the private sector. His government service is extensive; he served four years in the House as a Democratic congressman from Oklahoma and later deployed for a year in Iraq as a Navy intelligence officer.

He reportedly honed many of his ideas about reforming military personnel policy while serving as the Army's general counsel and subsequently its under secretary just prior to being named to the top DoD personnel post.

Now he's vowing to bring "revolutionary change" to the military personnel system. And he's looking to work fast - his goal is to unveil a detailed slate of proposals some time in August.

"The system ... has become sclerotic," he bluntly declared. "We're trying to clear it up a little bit, to where the blood can flow and we can get more flexibility."

The various reform proposals under review "all get to this notion that we need more flexibility, more permeability, more equity in the system."

"So you can envision a world where people have individualized career tracks," he said. "Perhaps we're more family-friendly. We're trying to deal with the issue of women's retention."

Congressional approval of fast track changes to the military retirement system is helping to lay a foundation for further reforms. Now nearing its final version on Capitol Hill, the new retirement plan will shrink current payments by about 20 percent.

In place of that, the military will begin offering cash contributions to individual retirement savings accounts, which troops will own outright after a few years of service regardless of whether they serve a full 20-year career. That cash will be accessible for withdrawal without penalty starting at age 59 and a half.

The new retirement benefit also will likely include some sort of "continuation pay," cash bonuses to mid-career troops who agree to an additional service commitment.

The new benefit, if approved as expected, could be the first in a series of major steps that give military manpower planners more tools and flexibility to motivate individual troops, boost specific career fields and change the shape of the future force, Carson said.

"A more flexible compensation system is essential to 21st-century talent management, and a retirement system is a critical part of that. But there is still more we need to do on the compensation front," he said.

"We have to contemplate differential pay for high-demand skills. We have to use bonuses more than we do today to keep people with high-demand skills. We have to think more broadly about these questions. When are pay raises going to be given to service members and at what stage of their career, to maximize retention?"

Reassessing Pay Tables

In the long run, pursuing answers to those questions may lead to a fundamental reassessment of the military pay table that has dictated across-the-board salary levels for generations.

"Out in the private sector, if you are in a high-demand job, you get paid more than your teammate who may be doing an important job but is in less demand on the outside," Carson said. "It's something we have to look at ...

We haven't made any decisions yet, but these are the kind of questions that we want to throw out for discussion, to say, 'Hey, is it OK if someone is making kind of a market-clearing wage that might be more than we typically pay an E-6 or E-7, if that is what it takes to keep that person in the military?'"

Just a few years ago, the Pentagon's top brass frequently warned that rising personnel costs were on course to overwhelm the defense budget and erode the military's ability to invest in new weapons systems and high-tech research. But those concerns have receded.

The shift in the Pentagon's approach to personnel is driven in part by anxiety about one specialized mission: cyber warfare.

Many top officials worry that the military is struggling to compete with the private sector to recruit and retain the most skilled cyber warriors.

And while the cyber force ultimately will comprise only a small fraction of the total force, Carson said that underscores the need for an increasingly skilled and well trained force in many other occupational specialties.

"The trend of having more educated service members is going to increase over time," he said. "I think this is what war in the 'Information Age' is all about. We have to compensate our military members in a way that is competitive with the labor market and the opportunities they have outside the all-volunteer force, and in a way commensurate with their service to their country."

'Up Or Out' On The Way Out?

Yet recruitment and retention are about more than money. Carson said one of his central goals is to reassess the up-or-out rules that define many of today's military career tracks. For officers, those rules are codified in federal law.

Those rules, with their rigid time-in-grade requirements, force young, highly talented troops to wait in line for promotions, while also forcing some individuals out of uniform if they fail to advance in timely fashion.

Those rules date back to the 1940s, when most military jobs were physically intensive and the force prioritized youth. Today, those rules are becoming outdated, Carson said. The military may consider moving to a system more similar to today's private sector, which promotes talented people when they are qualified, and allows people to remain in their current jobs if they're performing well.

"I do think people have realized that the up-or-out system is not effective in all areas of the military," he said.

"There may be certain careers where up-or-out works just fine and should be maintained. But that system doesn't work everywhere."

For traditional career fields like combat arms, up-or-out rules likely will remain. But in some newer fields - like cyber warfare - they may not, since those skills grow, rather than atrophy, with time.

"What we are trying to figure out is: What are the implications of that? How broad of a reach might a new system have? Will it be limited to a few careers? Or is this something that the whole force would be interested in?" Carson said.

"I think we need to be open minded that there are places to pilot this, places to test it," he said. "Perhaps it has widespread applicability. Of course, we should be open to the possibility that not every branch is fit for this." That said, Carson added, "Even the infantry might benefit from some of those changes."

2.) DoD's Personnel Overhaul and What it Means for the Navy/ 14 JULY 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Chief of Naval Personnel Public Affairs

Many of the personnel initiatives that the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and Chief of Naval Personnel have been implementing and are working toward are already aligned with what the DoD is developing.

Acting Undersecretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, Brad Carson, spoke on the Weekly Wire Rundown to discuss the DoD's "personnel overhaul" and what it means for the Navy.

Why is the DoD initiating a personnel system reform?

Video: [\[LINK\]](#)

The question for all of us is whether we have the force we need for the future, and that's what Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter asked me to look at. How are we going to redesign the personnel system for the 21st Century?

There is a growing consensus among the Navy and the other services that we need to rejuvenate some of these processes if we are going to meet the needs of the younger people who are coming in, to make sure that we keep women in and to make sure we have the adequate diversity across the force. This enables us to keep the best asset our military has, which is the people.

How is this DoD personnel reform linked to the Navy's recent personnel policy changes?

Video: [\[LINK\]](#)

The Navy is a leader in this; what the Secretary of the Navy, Chief of Naval Operations and Chief of Naval Personnel have talked about are exactly the things we are trying to do across the force. But, sometimes the Navy is hamstrung by legislative proposals that keep the Navy from doing all that it wants to do.

What we're trying to do is end some of these restrictions.

This initiative is frequently called an "overhaul" is that accurate and what goes into that?

It is an overhaul, because we have a personnel system that is based on the 20th Century—the Industrial Era. New people coming into the force want a more flexible system.

They want a personnel system that recognizes that everyone across the force has unique talents, and they want a job that closely aligns to them. They want the chance to raise a family. They want to stay in certain stations longer than previously allowed. They want the chance to go to graduate school. They want their promotions to be based on merit and not time in grade.

We're trying to change all those things, and for the military, that brings a revolution in human capital. What changes can Sailors serving today expect to see during their career?

Video: [\[LINK\]](#)

They will see big changes. They're going to be able to go to the Reserve component for awhile if they like—perhaps to continue their education, raise their family or pursue a civilian career—and then come back into the active component.

They won't have to wait in line for a promotion. Instead, it will be based on what competencies they acquire.

They'll have the chance to have a career path that is uniquely tailored to them and doesn't try to fit them into a one-size-fits-all personnel system.

3.) Statement by Secretary of Defense Ash Carter on DOD Transgender Policy/ 14 JULY 15 [\[LINK\]](#)

Over the last fourteen years of conflict, the Department of Defense has proven itself to be a learning organization. This is true in war, where we have adapted to counterinsurgency, unmanned systems, and new battlefield requirements such as MRAPs. It is also true with respect to institutional activities, where we have learned from how we repealed "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," from our efforts to eliminate sexual assault in the military, and from our work to open up ground combat positions to women. Throughout this time, transgender men and women in uniform have been there with us, even as they often had to serve in silence alongside their fellow comrades in arms.

The Defense Department's current regulations regarding transgender service members are outdated and are causing uncertainty that distracts commanders from our core missions. At a time when our troops have learned from experience that the most important qualification for service members should be whether they're able and willing to do their job, our officers and enlisted personnel are faced with certain rules that tell them the opposite. Moreover, we have transgender soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines - real, patriotic Americans - who I know are being hurt by an outdated, confusing, inconsistent approach that's contrary to our value of service and individual merit.

Today, I am issuing two directives to deal with this matter. First, DoD will create a working group to study over the next six months the policy and readiness implications of welcoming transgender persons to serve openly. Led by (Acting) Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness Brad Carson, and composed of military and civilian personnel representing all the military services and the Joint Staff, this working group will report to Deputy Secretary of Defense Bob Work. At my direction, the working group will start with the presumption that transgender persons can serve openly without adverse impact on military effectiveness and readiness, unless and except where objective, practical impediments are identified. Second, I am directing that decision authority in all administrative discharges for those diagnosed with gender dysphoria or who identify themselves as transgender be elevated to Under Secretary Carson, who will make determinations on all potential separations.

As I've said before, we must ensure that everyone who's able and willing to serve has the full and equal opportunity to do so, and we must treat all our people with the dignity and respect they deserve. Going forward, the Department of Defense must and will continue to improve how we do both. Our military's future strength depends on it.

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PENSACOLA, Fla. (NNS) -- The Navy Advancement Center (NAC) announced a new service July 13, allowing Sailors to request to receive profile sheet updates via email.

The move by the Naval Education Training and Personnel Development Technology Center's (NETPDTC) information technology department, is geared toward reaching out to Sailors.

"This is another example of the Navy Advancement Center's mission to make the advancement system more user-friendly," said NETPDTC's Command Master Chief, Master Chief Electronics Technician James Berhalter Jr.

To access this service, Sailors can log onto the Navy Knowledge Online (NKO) home page and select Navy Advancement Center under the Career Management drop-down tab, then click on My Advancement to access the Advancement Profile Sheet link. At the top of the profile sheet, there is a block to enter an email address. Once entered, push the button Register for Email Notification. Users can also easily opt out of the automatic notifications at any time.

Once registered, candidates will receive an email every time an updated advancement sheet profile is generated due to a change in advancement status. The email directs the candidate to access their account. The benefit of signing up for notifications is the time and effort that it saves the Sailor.

"Prior to the email notification service being implemented, Sailors who were frocked had to spend valuable time each month checking NKO to see if their pay status had changed," said Navy Enlisted Advancement Execution Division Head Thomas Uptide. "Now an email will be generated for anyone who signs up for the service, doing away with the need to check for that profile sheet notification."

For all of the latest updates and information concerning Navy advancement visit NAC's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Navy-Advancement-Center/213190711299> .

For more news from Naval Education and Training Command, visit www.navy.mil/local/cnet/ or <https://www.facebook.com/NavalEducationAndTrainingCommand> .

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